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PENELOPE CHESTER VISITS HER MINISTER.

STRUGGLES IN LIFE.

CHAPTER XXV.

AN UNWELCOME VISIT, AND AN EMBARRASSING INTERVIEW.—
AN ALARMING OCCURRENCE.

A BRIGHT fire was blazing in the grate; and a bright copper kettle, hissing and simmering on No. 170, 1855.

the hob, reflected the ruddy gleams from its polished surface. Margaret Filmer had lighted a pair of candles and had "set out" the tea-table, while her brother was closing the window-shutters and drawing the comfortable curtains which hid

them, and was now sitting in his arm-chair and rubbing his hands to impart to them some extra warmth.

It was a snug little parlour that, in the minister's house in this Gloucestershire valley; and Edward Filmer and his sister were as cheerful a pair of beings as any young bachelor and his still younger maiden sister could be expected to be. They had had their sorrows, however, and they had still their vexations; one of which was, at this very time, drawing near to their door.

Knocking at it too—a sharp, stern, deliberate rap, rap, of the brass knocker, which startled Margaret from her kneeling posture—for she was just then toasting a slice of bread—and brought her quickly upon her feet.

There was an expression of comic embarrassment in the face which she turned towards her brother, at the first sound of the knocker.

"If it isn't that dear old troubler, Miss Chester, Edward! I should know her knock among fifty others. What are we to do?"

Mr. Filmer had half risen from his seat at the summons, and his hand was moving quickly towards an open book on the table, which a little while before he had laid down. But he stopped short before he had reached it.

"No, I won't," he said; and he sat down again.

"Two candles burning, Edward; and toast for tea, and you reading a—hem!—not exactly a divinity lecture," said Miss Filmer.

"Nothing in either of these things that you and I need be ashamed of, Margaret," rejoined her brother; "I would not willingly do anything to shock the good lady's rather powerful prejudices, but since she has come in unexpectedly, let everything be as it was, even to the toast making, my dear sister."

"Oh, she will smell that fast enough; but here she comes—she has taken her clogs off—let me put the book away."

"Not on any account, Margaret. I should despise myself—"

The hurried conversation, which had been carried on in a subdued tone, was interrupted by the opening of the door, and the entrance of the lady who had caused it, after being duly announced.

Miss Penelope's countenance was troubled and angry; far too much so, indeed, to permit her to notice the enormity of a candle burning to waste in her minister's house, or the unnecessary and effeminate luxury of buttered toast, or the open book, which lay temptingly at her elbow, as she seated herself at as great a distance from the fire as the table would allow. She was not cold; indeed she had found it very warm walking. To her thinking, it was a very mild evening, and had been mild all day: she had not felt it cold, she was sure. It was only those who sat by the fire all day, doing nothing, that got chilled so easily, said Miss Chester.

There was generally a strange mixture of snappishness and affection, patronage and respect, in Miss Penelope Chester's tone towards her minister and his sister. At this moment the first of these ingredients seemed to predominate. But, as in all other mixtures where the due proportions are kept, if the bitter comes all in the

first gulp, the sweet is left to the last; so was it with Miss Chester.

"We shall get on famously by-and-by," thought Margaret Filmer. "I was afraid she would open sweet upon us at first."

The sweet, however, was a long time in coming. Miss Penelope was, in short, this evening, almost wholly impracticable. She would not remove her bonnet; she would not take tea; she should have tea when she got home again. She came out because she was in a little trouble, she said; and she did not know that there was much good in that; and perhaps if she told what her trouble was, she should not get much sympathy or help; indeed she did not expect to do so; and she ought not to expect it, perhaps; only, as Mr. Filmer was her minister, and Ellen's minister as well, in a certain sense, and as he and Miss Filmer had taken a sort of liking to the girl, it was right that they should know.

To this point the good lady had been allowed to go on without interruption; but at the mention of Ellen's name, Miss Filmer hastily interposed.

"Oh, do not say that we shall not sympathise and help as much as lays in our power, Miss Chester: it was kind in you to come to us. Poor Ellen is ill, I know."

"Ellen Marsden is as well as you and I are at this moment, Miss Filmer," said Penelope; "and one part of my business here this evening is to return this book, which you lent her a good while ago." And Miss Chester drew from her pocket a small volume, which she pushed across the table to Margaret.

"I am very sorry you should have ventured out such an evening as this for such a purpose," replied the minister's sister, good-humouredly. "Ellen was quite welcome to keep the book as long as she pleased."

"She has kept it too long already, Miss Filmer," said the visitor, sharply; "and I have to request that, while the girl remains at Rosemary-lodge, you will lend her no more such books. I have a right to ask that, I think, Miss Filmer."

"I do not understand this," rejoined the younger lady, a little flushed; "I can only say, I am sorry if my lending Ellen a book has given offence. I did not imagine—"

"I think," interposed her brother gently, "Miss Chester intimated that this was but one part of her errand—a very insignificant part of it, I am sure. There is some trouble; and if we can help you out of it, my dear lady, or assist you in bearing it, you have a right to command our best services, and we shall be but too happy to render them."

"The trouble is this, Mr. Filmer," said the good lady, angrily: "here I have been trying to make that girl of some use in the world, and have taken a world of trouble on my shoulders without any occasion; and the upshot of it is, that she cares no more about me than if I was paid for taking care of her."

"Surely you are mistaken, my dear friend," said the young minister; "I have always observed how uncommonly grateful our little Ellen has seemed; and I am sure she always speaks of you with the utmost respect."

"I don't know what you call utmost respect

and uncommon gratitude, Mr. Filmer," retorted the lady; "but you had better read *that*, and tell me how much respect and gratitude there is there;" and Miss Chester drew from the self-same pocket which just before had discharged the offending book, a roll of manuscript closely written, which she, with triumphant bitterness expressed in her countenance, held up to view before she laid it on the table.

"Read it, Mr. Filmer; read it, Miss Filmer. I brought it on purpose for you to read. You did not know that we had such a clever literary lady at Rosemary-lodge, I suppose? Quite a second Miss Burney we have got in our quiet little Gloucestershire valley. See, here is the title: 'The Adopted Niece; or, The Trials of Clara Conway.' Quite pathetic it is, I assure you."

"I really do not understand——" Mr. Filmer began.

"I should be surprised if you did, sir," said Miss Penelope. "I do not think you would guess that anybody about me could have time to waste in this way; but it all comes of being too indulgent. To think of a girl—a chit—a little huzzy of fifteen, setting up in such a line of life! I don't wonder at your being confounded, Mr. Filmer: I was. She will be making poetry next, I suppose."

Edward Filmer cast a sidelong glance at the book he had been reading that afternoon, and wished it farther away, perhaps, at that moment. He wondered, at least, if the title of it had caught Miss Chester's eye—"THE LAY OF THE LAST MINSTREL," A POEM!

"As a general rule, I certainly agree with you," he said, "that an excessive indulgence in light literature is not only a sad waste of time, but injurious in many other ways; still there may be times when we may safely and beneficially take up a well-written work of imagination, for the relaxation of an hour, when the mind is jaded and worn. At least, I have sometimes found it so. The bow that is always bent, you know," added the young minister, with a pleasant smile, "is apt to become overstrained."

"I don't know anything about that, Mr. Filmer," continued the lady; "but I see I shall not have you on my side about Ellen; and as to Miss Filmer, she seems to be wrapped up in the stuff that silly child has been writing; so I had better go."

Margaret, who had been looking at the written pages, now interposed, and with some difficulty restrained Miss Chester's anger. "It is very childish nonsense," she said, "that dear Ellen has been scribbling; and perhaps I am partly to blame for it."

"Well, if the honest truth is to be told, and an old woman like me may speak it, I think so too, Miss Filmer," exclaimed Penelope, with sudden alacrity.

"I am willing to bear it all," said Margaret, mildly, "if it would screen our dear little Ellen from your anger. By being partly to blame, I mean that the book you have returned——"

Miss Chester nodded, as much as to say, "There, you see I have caught you."

——is about some young ladies who wrote, or are supposed to have written, their own biographies;

and I suppose that dear Ellen, fired by their example, has attempted a fanciful story in the same style. I cannot say much for her execution, poor child! she does not know how much skill is needed to write even a simple composition."

"And that is all you can make of it, Miss Filmer, is it?" asked Miss Chester, grimly smiling. "Now I call it an ungrateful, perverse, artful, rebellious heap of wickedness. Clara Conway, indeed! as if anybody couldn't see that that's plain English for Ellen Marsden, and that Mrs. Mildew is quite as plain English for Penelope Chester. The trials of Clara Conway indeed! The impudent child shall have another trial to add to her book before I have done with her, that she doesn't guess at: for back to London *she* goes if she does not take care; and we'll see how she likes that."

Miss Filmer perhaps thought in her secret heart that to poor Ellen this might be no overwhelming calamity. It was plain to her how the case stood. The child's strong tendency to mirth, her vivid perception of the ridiculous, and her active imagination, all pent up and forbidden to manifest themselves in their natural channels, had found an escape in these scribbled pages, in which, with some exercise of ingenuity, an unhappy Mrs. Mildew was capable of being tortured into a likeness of Miss Penelope Chester, and the misadventures of a young heroine might, by a strong exercise of suspicion in the reader, pass for the serio-comic experiences of Ellen Marsden. It would have been easy for Margaret to have said this—easy to have said also, "If you must take the matter so seriously to heart, Miss Chester, thank yourself for the mischief you have worked and are working in that child's mind: think how you have cribbed, cabined, and confined her young heart, and chilled her strong affections. Thank Heaven that you have not crushed them quite, and go home to adopt a wiser course. Release the child from the restraints which vex and irritate her jocund spirits; and tell her that you have made a mistake in thinking that a maiden's merry laugh is high treason against propriety, and that there is nothing in life to make one happy and joyful."

This and a great deal more Miss Filmer might have said if she had wished to widen the breach between little Ellen and her cousin-aunt; but as she wished rather to be a peace-maker, she adopted another course, and said how truly sorry she was her dear little Ellen had displeased her aunt; and begged to know how the discovery was made.

And thus it was. Miss Chester had had her suspicions roused by a report of Rachel, the housemaid, that Miss Ellen had been used, for a long time past, to get up very early in the morning, "doing a deal of writing," which she kept close in her little desk. Now, Miss Chester had a great abhorrence of mystery, and this "doing a deal of writing" was mysterious. What could Ellen want to be doing a deal of writing about? When she wanted to write letters home, she could do that in the day time, not very early in the morning. Very early in the morning, indeed! If Ellen wanted to get up earlier in the morning than the rest of the house, she should have something to do that would be of more use than doing

a deal of writing. So, without further parlarce, Miss Chester had risen that morning, an hour or more before her usual time, had pounced upon the young culprit in the very act and deed of her offence, and had borne off the spoil in triumph, and without resistance of her authority; she acknowledged that.

"And then?" said Margaret, who knew or feared that something else was to follow, though Miss Penelope paused in her recital.

"What would you have done if you had been in my place, Miss Filmer?" asked the lady, rather sarcastically.

"I think I should have asked Ellen's permission to read what she had written," said Margaret; "at least, I would have left it to her choice to have informed me of the nature of her occupation."

"There's just the difference between you and me, Miss Filmer," rejoined Miss Chester. "Ask her permission, indeed! No; I just set myself down, though she begged and prayed that I wouldn't—"

"Poor child!" ejaculated Edward Filmer.

"Yes, I did, Mr. Filmer; and I read it from beginning to the end of what she had written; and I made her stand by me all the time too."

"A sore trial to a young authoress, that, I am sure," said Mr. Filmer, with a good-humoured smile. "I hope you did not carry your resentment farther than that, Miss Chester."

"I did carry it farther than that, sir," continued Miss Penelope, snappishly. "I gave the girl such a scolding as she has not had this many a day, I'll warrant; and 'Now, madam,' I said, 'you just go into the little green chamber, and come out of it again till I come to fetch you out if you dare.' And up she went, without a word more, looking as independent as you please; and there my young lady has been from that time to this, without pen, ink, paper, or book; and bread and water has been her portion to-day, Miss Filmer; and if cold and hunger won't bring down her proud spirit—"

Margaret Filmer had with difficulty restrained herself till now; but at last she was roused—"You do not mean," she demanded, with trembling earnestness, while her eyes sparkled with indignation—"you do not say that you have dared—that you had the heart—that you have been so cruel—"

"Hey day!" exclaimed Miss Penelope.

"So cruel," continued Miss Filmer, without heeding either the interruption or her brother's hand gently laid on her arm—"so cruel, I say, as to expose that poor child to such sufferings of mind and body as you speak of; that, while we have been sitting here by this warm fire, and for hours and hours through this bitter cold day, poor Ellen has been cruelly—yes, I say cruelly, Miss Chester," and Margaret's bosom heaved with sympathy and generous warmth—"cruelly tortured, and her sensitive mind lacerated by being punished as a mere child—if there were no other cruelty in it—and all for a fault—if a fault there has been—of your own making and seeking."

Margaret paused at length; it was time, for Miss Penelope, who at first listened incredulously to such unwonted tones from her gentle friend,

now sat with sharp, keen eyes and reddened face, to take up the cudgels in high wrath.

"Punishment, indeed! talk about punishment," said she: "why, Miss Filmer, I was two years older than that child that you make such a fuss about, and speak of as if she was a woman, when I was well whipped for a less fault than hers: whipped, ma'am, and with my mother's own hand; and if I had been Ellen's mother, which I am thankful I am not, she should have been whipped too. And the fault was of my own making and seeking, was it, Miss Filmer? You are right there; it is of my own making and seeking. If I hadn't meddled with cousin Leonard's affairs when he was brought down to nothing, I shouldn't have had this trouble; and since the girl is to be taken part with in this way, my duty is plain: back she goes, as sure—"

The outspoken current of the good lady's anger was arrested by the young minister. "Do not, pray do not, my dear Miss Chester, make any harsh resolutions. Remember, you said you came to us for sympathy and advice."

"Pretty sort of sympathy, Mr. Filmer," exclaimed Miss Penelope.

"For sympathy and advice; and do not blame Margaret for—well, I will say, a little hastiness of expression, which, at another time, your own kind heart, Miss Chester, would have dictated. I am sure my sister would be the last person in the world to abet our dear young friend in anything that is really wrong, and the first to apologize for any undue warmth of feeling."

"I do not wish Miss Filmer to apologize to me, sir," said the lady, with much dignity, and bowing stiffly. "I ought to apologize," she added, in the same tone, "for disturbing your meal."

"You must not, indeed you must not go thus," said Edward Filmer; "at least you will permit us to accompany you." But, deaf to remonstrance, the lady marched to the door, and the next moment had vanished.

Margaret had disappeared also, and the young minister was sipping his cold tea, in a brown study, when she entered, cloaked, gloved, and bonneted.

"You must go with me, Edward," she said—"quick, quick, there's a good brother."

"Where, Margaret?"

"Where? Why, to see poor dear Ellen," said she, impatiently. "Miss Chester won't refuse me that, at all events."

"I am not sure of that, Margaret; for she is 'plaguy stubborn,' you know, as lord Grange used to say of Duncan Forbes."

"Don't talk about Duncan Forbes, Edward," urged Margaret, "when that poor child is suffering as she must have been all day. There, that's right; here's the other boot: now your great coat, now—"

"But you have had no tea, Margaret."

Margaret made a gesture of impatience, and the next minute they were on the road.

It was piercingly cold and dark.

"Poor Ellen!" sobbed Margaret, as she shivered with the change of atmosphere. "It will kill her, Edward."

"No, no, I hope not—not seriously injure her, even. But I am very sorry: it was very wrong of

Miss Chester. But, Margaret, were you not a little, a very little too hasty? You know our good friend's peculiarities."

"I was not half warm enough, Edward," said Margaret, energetically. "You don't know so well as I do what that dear child has had to bear from the caprices and peculiarities, as you call them—I call them insanities—of Miss Chester; nor yet how quietly she has borne them because she would not distress her father and sister and brother. And now that, because she has had no one to cheer her up and to confide in, and has even been kept of late from coming to see us, as much as decency would allow, she has taken a simple way of amusing herself—she has been treated like a felon, and—"

"Hush, hush, my dear sister," whispered Edward.

"I won't hush; I can't, Edward; I say because she has found out a way of amusing herself, she is to be shut up in a cold room—that green chamber, Edward—an unfurnished room without carpet, or curtain, or fire; and Ellen so delicate as she has been of late. I say she will be perished. Come, Edward, do make haste."

"It is very shocking: I did not know—" said Mr. Filmer, quickening his pace to keep up with his sister; "but, Margaret, you must speak Miss Chester fair."

"I'll go down on my knees to her, Edward, if that will do any good; but poor Ellen is to be thought of first."

It was a long walk from the minister's house to Rosemary-lodge, and the road was rough and in some parts precipitous. There was another way across some meadows.

"Miss Chester will be sure to have gone by the road, Edward; let us go through the fields: it won't make much difference, and we had better not fall in with her," said Margaret. So they went over the fields.

The mistress of Rosemary-lodge had not arrived.

"Oh, I am glad you are come, Miss Filmer," exclaimed Hannah. "You must go up-stairs directly and see poor Miss Ellen: she is sobbing and crying as if her heart would break; and for the matter of that, it has got enough to break it."

"I know what has happened, Hannah. I will go this moment."

The room was dark and dismal—that green chamber—and Ellen, cold as marble, had scarcely power to look up as the door opened. She did look up, however, and threw her arms round Margaret's neck.

"Take me away from this cruel, cruel place, dear, dear Miss Filmer," she sobbed. "Let me go home—anywhere—I will not stop here; I cannot. You do not know what I have suffered to-day."

"I know all, dear Ellen; be patient. You must leave this room now, at all events."

Ellen tottered to the drawing-room. The last hour's exposure to a freezing atmosphere had prostrated her power of endurance. The warmth of the drawing-room for a moment revived her, and then she fainted.

It was very strange. In all this time, while Margaret was chafing the limbs of the fainting girl, and Mr. Filmer was beating his brains to

think what powerful restoratives he had heard of, and Hannah was warming a blanket to wrap the half-perished girl in, and warmed it so thoroughly that she burnt a great hole in the middle of it; and when Ellen had permanently revived, and lay on the sofa, very pale, however, and her face wet with tears; and Mr. Filmer was making her drink mutton broth—the materials for which were, by good hap, at Rosemary-lodge—so hot that it almost scalded her mouth, and made her laugh her own merry laugh while the tears came the faster—while all this was taking place, which took more than an hour, and everybody was doing everything, as though they were perfectly at home at Rosemary-lodge, no one thought of asking, "Where is Miss Chester?" At last, however, it did occur to Mr. Filmer that they were making remarkably free with that good lady's drawing-room; and then, by an extraordinary coincidence, and with great unanimity, everybody wondered that Miss Chester had not returned.

They passed a long time in wondering and suggesting that Miss Chester had gone farther on into the village, or had called in at one or other of the scattered cottages which lay in her way home. Last of all, it occurred to Miss Filmer, whose indignation had by this time considerably evaporated, that it would be as well, at least, to send Ben with a lantern to seek his mistress, and light her home when found. Ben did not exactly approve of the mission, and he was a long time hunting up his lantern, and a long time buttoning up his great-coat; at last he went off muttering to himself, and very audibly saying, that if Ben wasn't silly, he would have looked out for another place long ago.

The darkness had increased in intensity, and so had the cold; and great flakes of snow were falling—a regular snow-storm had commenced.

In less than an hour Ben returned alone. Miss Chester hadn't been to the village, that he could learn: she hadn't been seen there. She had not called at the cottages; no one had seen her.

Then, for the first time, did it seem rational to suppose that some accident had befallen her—a fall—a slip—a path lost in the darkness.

Once more Ben was "hounded out," as he said, but this time not alone. Mr. Filmer accompanied him.

In half an hour they returned, bearing between them, with the help of two labourers summoned to their assistance, the insensible body of Penelope Chester. She had stepped from the road, in the darkness of the evening, and fallen or rolled down a steep bank. There they had found her, stretched on the ground and almost covered with snow.

She breathed feebly, and uttered a moan now and then; and once more Ben was hurried off—this time for a surgeon.

"If this isn't a punishment on missus for what she has done this very day," exclaimed Hannah, when the surgeon had pronounced that his patient had *only* broken her leg, and would do very well, though the cold had almost deprived her of vitality, "I never shall know what a punishment is—that's all."

Margaret Filmer and her brother did not leave Rosemary-lodge that night.

FATHER THAMES UNDER ARREST.

A REMINISCENCE OF THE TWENTY-FIRST OF FEBRUARY.

WE can call to mind a certain sunshiny morning on a Valentine's day in a long-vanished year, when, starting for a holiday to Gravesend on board a river steamer, we were literally broiled by the sun's rays, and glad to escape from them, on our arrival, to the shady side of the street. And now, here we are a week after Valentine's day, when, according to the almanack, the birds should be looking up the materials for their nests; and so far from bearing us merrily on his back to festive Gravesend or to any other place, old Father Thames is taken into custody by Jack Frost, who has bound him in chains of ice, and put it out of the old gentleman's power to be of use to anybody. The good old river cuts but a sorry figure in this his hour of humiliation. No longer the rippling highway of a countless population and an unrivalled traffic, echoing the cries of the mariners, the panting of engines, the dash of paddles, the dip of oars, or the hoarse song of the bargeman, he is condemned to hard labour as profitless as the wind-grinding treadmill, and spends the weary hours in carrying to and fro on his back one interminable field of shifting ice, laden with hummocky snow. The unmanageable mass, as it travels up and down with the tide, crashes angrily against any opposing obstacle, and shivers itself into fragments, or sweeps along with it the object that would impede its course. Yonder come a couple of broad barges chained together, which the sharp ice-blades have severed from their moorings and made a prize of: locked fast in a broad floe, you see them borne broadside on towards the abutments of the bridge, against which they are hurled with a cracking din that may be heard for half a mile, and then slowly wheeling round are shot through the arch, crushed onwards by the masses behind. While you are calculating how much of this sort of treatment they will bear, they appear again on the other side, one with a dismal gash in the stern, received from the ice, and partly stove in through the ribs by repeated blows from its fellow-prisoner, which, happening to be laden with heavy blocks of stone, plays the part of the iron pot in the fable. One would think that the claim which might be made for the salvage of two such vessels would instigate efforts for their rescue; but so rare is a calamity of this kind in London that ice-boats fit to contend with such a peril are not to be had, and the barges will drift up and down till they are brought to the shore or sent to the bottom.

The sun, on this 21st of February, shines brightly, but the mist rising from the river converts his beams into a yellow haze, through which the distant bridges, the farthest barely discernible, show like indistinct monstrosities crawling over a white sheet. Eastward, the dense clusters of masts loom darkly like a wintry forest in a fog, and between their blackened hulls comes ever crawling on, grinding, splitting, and butting its way, the restless mass of snow-laden ice. On the water the business of the port of London is at a stand-still. Up or down the river, or even across the stream, not a plank dares to venture. Lading and unlading may go on as usual, but until the

cargo of ice is got rid of, and the Pool is a pool again, no more arrivals or departures from the classic shores of Wapping.

What becomes of poor Jack * now that his landed estate, the mud, is got into the icy court of chancery? What of his patron the waterman, since he cannot get at the water? What are the stokers and the engineers about, now that their fires are all out, and the admonitions of "turn ahead" and "turn astern" are put to silence by a frosty "stop her?" What is become of that sonorous urchin into whose ear and out of whose mouth the mandate of the captain finds its way to the iron muscles of the engine? Where is the steward in that little box below gone to? Where is the stewardess? and the money-taker? and where that band of harp, cornet-à-piston and violin? in what dark, semi-subterranean recess do they condescend to attune the river's harmonies now that the river is in the dumps and harmonious no longer?

We might go on asking such questions as these till the frost broke up; but who will respond to them? As for poor Jack and the juvenile acoustic tube to which we have referred, we have a strong suspicion that they would be found not far asunder on the ice of one or other of the parks, picking up the crumbs that fall from the skater's pocket. But the poor watermen, who have their wives and families to maintain—the lightermen and coal-whippers—the wharf-porters, and that whole army of supernumeraries who camp upon the banks of the Thames below bridge, and to whom every heaving tide of the noble river, as it proudly swells laden with the wealth of the world, brings their daily bread—how do they feel under the icy hand that has stopped their supplies at the very moment when the wind is least tempered and their necessities are undoubtedly the greatest?

A great frost is in truth a great calamity, inflicting losses upon the public far outweighing those of the greatest fires that have occurred in these latter years—losses that are felt by all, but more especially by the poor and the improvident, which is often but another name for the ignorant. As we believe that every ordination of Providence has its special moral mission, so we would suggest that that of the severe weather we have of late experienced may be two-fold: on the one hand—to inculcate by the arousing of sympathy the practice of charity and benevolence among those who have the means at their command—and, on the other, to teach those who are dependent upon their own exertions the importance of making a provision in prosperous times for a day of adversity.

The commencement of 1855 will hereafter be memorable in the history of great frosts. It is true the Thames in London was not completely frozen over, nor is it soon likely to be, in consequence of the removal of old London-bridge, which, by preventing the escape of the masses of floating ice, anciently blocked up the channel. Had the old bridge been standing we should have seen the river frozen over, and in all likelihood

* For the benefit of provincial readers, we may explain that poor Jack is the individual who earns a copper from passengers across the Thames, by providing a plank on which they may step into or out of the wherry.

the old fairs revived at the moment at which we write. On reverting to the records of frosts on the Thames, we find no mention made of any frost of such intensity as the present having endured to so late a season of the year. For the satisfaction of the reader we shall glance curtly at some of the great frosts as they stand upon the record.

The earliest of which any report is made by Stow occurred in 1281-2, commencing at Christmas. When the thaw suddenly came, five arches of London-bridge were carried away by the floating masses of ice. In 1410 a frost of fourteen weeks again locked up the Thames. In 1434-5 the river was frozen over from London-bridge to Gravesend—the frost enduring from December 25th to February 10th. In 1506, and again in 1515, the river was hard enough for the passage of men and horses. In 1564 the same thing occurred again. In 1608 the frost set in on the 22nd of December, and endured till the 2nd of February; booths and tents were then pitched on the Thames, and public traffic and public sports gave to the scene the character of a fair. In 1609 a frost commencing in October lasted four months, and the river was again thoroughly frozen. In 1683, beginning early in December, the frost lasted to the 5th of February; so firm was the ice that the people built whole streets, and opened shops upon it, and the gentry rode on it in their carriages; bull-baiting and all kinds of sports took place. King Charles attended, and had his own name printed at one of the presses. The frost broke up on February the 5th, and the day after the king died. In 1688-9 the river was again frozen over, and the sports renewed, but in two days the ice disappeared. Again in 1709 printing presses were at work on the ice; and in 1715 a frost, enduring from the end of November to February 9th, gave rise to the repetition of the frost fair of king Charles's time. In 1739-40 frost fair was again inaugurated. It was at this fair that Doll, the pippin-woman, lost her life by stepping into a fissure, which, suddenly closing, cut off her head—a circumstance of which Gay has made the most in his "Trivia." This frost broke up suddenly, and booths, huts, and shops, were all carried away in the *débauche*. A violent frost in 1768 occasioned much damage; and again in 1789 the Thames was the scene of a large fair, when a pig was roasted and a bear hunted on the ice, and presses were at work as before. At Blackfriars the ice was eighteen feet thick. When at length it broke up suddenly, the people rushed to the shore for their lives, and a fearful scene ensued. A vessel made fast to the beam of a house veered round and pulled the house down, killing five sleeping inmates. The Thames was frozen over in January, 1811, for a short time; but the greatest frost which has occurred within the memory of living Englishmen, was that of 1813-14, which began on the 27th of December and endured to the 5th of February. Of this frost, with its fair, its swings, book-stalls, sheep-roasting, skittle-playing, license, and uproar, we have a distinct recollection, and indeed have mentioned it already in a previous volume. Again the thaw was as sudden as the freezing had been gradual; the ice cracked on the 5th February, and away floated enormous

sections, carrying with them booths, stalls, and printing-presses. Since that period, though there have been severe frosts, that of 1837 being of long duration, the current of the Thames at London has never been fast locked beneath the motionless ice.

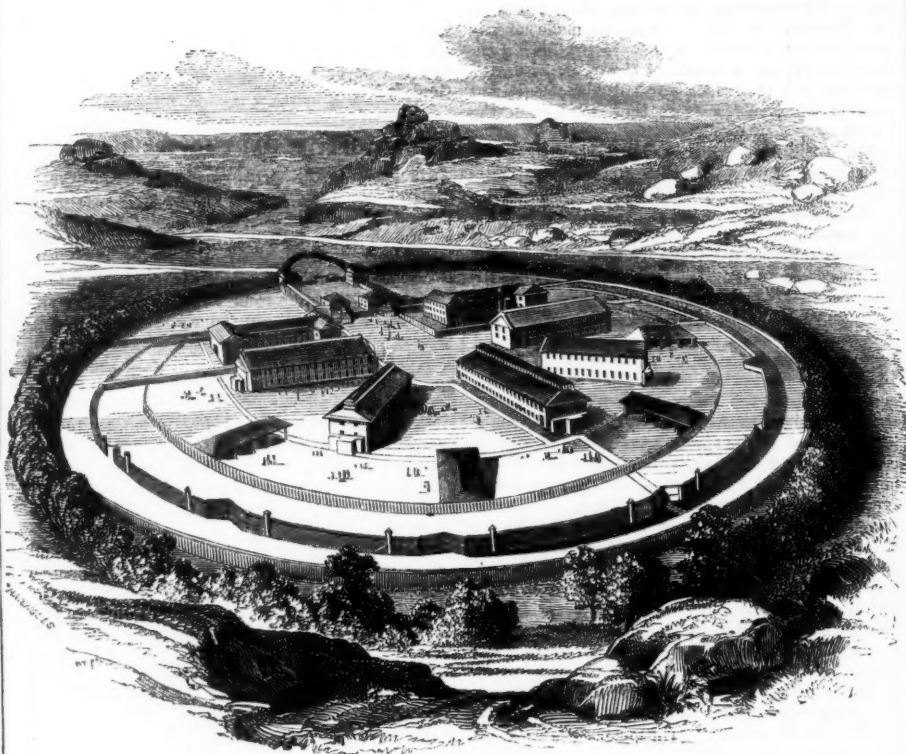
A VISIT TO DARTMOOR PRISON.

THIS great government receptacle for prisoners under sentence of transportation stands, with its neighbourhood of barracks and small houses known by the name of "Prince-town," amidst the wild heath scenery which is peculiar to many parts of the great waste called Dartmoor, in the county of Devonshire. A ride from Plymouth, of some sixteen miles in length, in the right direction, concerning which sundry guide-posts are very eloquent and explicit, will bring the visitor to the dismal and dreary spot in which the prison, with an evident eye to the advantages of association, is suitably situated. A few words of description, as to the prospect which presents itself from the prison premises, may not be unserviceable at starting, as a means of giving our readers a somewhat complete idea of the scenic accessories of this penal establishment.

With the exception of the inhabited and cultivated ground immediately around the prison, a hilly wilderness presents itself to the eye of the observer in every direction. A succession of sterile, granite-strewn heights, yielding at best but very scanty herbage for a few straggling flocks of melancholy and unsociable-looking sheep, stretch away in undulating lines on all sides, until the horizon bounds and completes the view. No tree or hedgerow diversifies, no human habitation enlivens the scene; unless, indeed, we except an occasional moors-man's hut, which adds, if possible, to the wretchedness of the locality by the meanness and misery of its appearance. All is gloomy and forbidding enough on fine days, which in this elevated, cloud-invested, boggy spot are indeed "few and far between;" but on a dull and rainy day, such as it was on the occasion of our visit, the place seemed the chosen abode of dreariness and desolation. As we gazed that morning on the lowering sky and the dismal landscape, and thought how well adapted the situation was for punitive purposes, the official who accompanied us said, as if it were a thing to be proud of, "We never see a sparrow here, sir!" and our admiration of the sagacity and good sense of the knowing little bird referred to rose and increased exceedingly.

The prison, which was originally erected for the reception of prisoners of war, consists of a series of large buildings, built of great blocks of stone, and radiating from a common centre. A stone wall, about twenty feet high, encircles the whole establishment, and incloses, as may be supposed, a considerable area. Four of the great buildings to which we have adverted are occupied by prisoners, and are called "Nos. 1, 2, 3, and 4 prisons." The others are used for various industrial and useful purposes, which we shall presently endeavour to describe.

On entering the outer gate of the prison—over which is engraven a Latin inscription, bespeaking



DARTMOOR PRISON.

mercy and compassion for the fallen—plain-looking houses, the residences of the governor, the deputy-governor, the steward, and other officials, stand to the right and left; and a stone-paved roadway leads down to the central building, which is divided and subdivided into offices, mess-rooms, and dormitories for the warders. This edifice, on the whole plain and unpretending, has its gate, its porter's lodge, its clock, and its bell tower, surmounted by a weathercock, made apparently of gilded tin, and twisted in the form of a crown, which certainly swings, and turns, and creaks as if it felt proud of holding a government situation, and none of the lowest either.

"We will first go to No. 1 prison," said, or rather soliloquised, our conductor—a fine, active, elderly, principal warder, with a stick in his hand and a gold-laced cap on his head; smart, erect, and evidently an old soldier; so, forthwith, we turned to the right through a gateway, and crossed the parade ground, a well kept piece of gravelled ground, about 450 yards long and 50 feet wide, as it appeared to us; then, turning to the right again and going through a smaller gateway, kept carefully locked, we ascended a pathway, flanked to the left by a piece of garden ground, where, from the nature of the soil and situation, we suppose, we beheld an inspiring exhibition of vegetables growing "under difficulties." Another turn to

the right brought us to "No. 1." This prison has a ground floor and an upper floor, both of which are sectioned into "wards" or large rooms, called respectively "A ward," B ward, C ward, etc. We went first, in due alphabetical order, into "A ward," where we found about fifty prisoners busily engaged in making and repairing shoes. As soon as the officer in charge of the "shoemakers' shop" saw us and our guide approaching, he shouted in a military style, "Attention!" The rattle of the hammers and lapstones immediately subsided, and perfect silence ensued. On our suggestion, however, the work was resumed. The warder in charge, who was very properly a shoemaker by trade, took evident pleasure in answering our inquiries, and in exhibiting specimens of the prisoners' work. The best samples of workmanship, he said, were from the hands of "real tradesmen," or men apprenticed to the "gentle craft," of whom there were but few; and he then, at our request, showed us some rough but strong and creditable work, done by prisoners who had learned all they knew of shoemaking since they came into prison. The men seemed to labour with as much willingness and cheerfulness as might be reasonably expected under the circumstances of their position—were decently clad in a light brown dress—had badges and red stripes on their arms to denote their length of sentence, and the number of months during which

they had been "very good," or otherwise—seemed healthy—and were permitted to converse, but not noisily, during the hours of labour. We learned, on inquiry, that these men slept and took their meals in this workshop; and we observed a corroboration of the statement in the hammocks and bedding of the men rolled up very tastefully, and placed in a very orderly manner upon shelves or racks above their heads. But we could not avoid feeling, nor forbear observing, that it seemed to us a ground of regret that the men were not provided with another room for a dormitory, as this working ward, in spite of the utmost attention to cleanliness and ventilation, had about it a sickly, earthy, close odour, which was anything but agreeable to us, and when the place is shut up during the night must be anything but healthful for the men.

We found "B ward" full of tailors, menders, and stocking darners. A few of these prisoners were *bonâ fide* tailors, worked in company, and were making clothes for the officers and various authorities of the establishment. The others were busily engaged in making and repairing clothing for their fellow prisoners. They seemed to be chiefly invalids and cripples, who had obtained indoor work on account of their physical inability to perform the heavier tasks required of the outdoor labourers. On our remarking that they appeared to be a body of docile and well-behaved men, we were informed by an experienced official, that, although there were amongst them, as in all large bodies of convicts, a good proportion of tractable and properly-conducted prisoners, yet, as a general rule, the invalids were the most sly, deceptive, and unmanageable convicts in the place. Assuredly, the furtive glances and forbidding looks of many of these men fully attested the truth and accuracy of the statement made by the officer.

We were, by this time, glad to leave the room, for its atmosphere was very close and oppressive. We were informed that the occupants of the ward worked, slept, and lived in this place day and night for years, or the greater part of every year of their detention, with the exception of an hour's exercise daily in the adjoining yard, when the state of the weather permitted it. We came to the conclusion—it might be an erroneous one, but we came to it—that if these men were healthy on the whole, as we were told they were, they were healthy rather in spite of this arrangement than on account of it.

We now went up-stairs to the floor which is fitted up and used as an infirmary. We found about fifty prisoners here, in various stages of debility and disease, from a slight cold to a rapid consumption. A few only were in extreme and immediate danger. This state of things, considering that there are, ordinarily, about 1200 men in this prison, and that nearly every man is invalided hither from other stations, is eminently indicative of the salubrity of the locality, and highly creditable to the care and skill of the medical officers who have charge of the injured and afflicted in this extensive establishment.

The infirmary here has an efficient staff of warders and assistant warders, acquainted with the peculiar duties required, and assiduously attentive to the comfort and welfare of the patients,

as far as the rules and discipline of a prison will allow. The nurses are prisoners of good character, who have been appointed, at their own request, to the post they occupy, and have been found to possess patience, steadiness, industry, and other indispensable qualifications.

There appears to be much less "malingering," or pretended disease, amongst the convicts, since the abolition of transportation as it was, and the adoption of "penal servitude" at home in lieu of expatriation to the colonies. Under the old system, as soon as any tidings of the sailing of a "convict ship" were heard amongst the men on "public works," such hosts of prisoners besieged the surgeon every morning, with complaints of pains in the side; there was such spitting of blood, such palpitation of the heart; there were such fits, and such sores on the legs of many of the convicts, that any one not versed in prison matters would have thought that the Angel of Death had breathed in the faces of the men, and filled the prison with expiring sufferers. But the "old hands" on the medical staff were quite aware of the fact that all these ailments, and many others, might be, and often were, simulated or caused by sundry means with which they were well acquainted. The attacks used to continue, in many cases, with great violence until the "doctor" had rejected the afflicted ones and the "convict ship" had sailed.

The recent change in the laws as to secondary punishments has led all pretended invalids to find that they have been, to use their own phrase, "playing a losing game." Formerly, a convict might manage to mislead the medical officer, get "invalided," and sent to a "hulk" or any other station, where he might have extra diet and a life of almost entire idleness, and be liberated as soon or even sooner than a well-conducted able-bodied man. But, according to the rules brought recently into operation, these inducements have ceased to exist, and the advantage is on the side of the hardworking, uncomplaining prisoner, who gains his liberty, other things being equal, at an earlier period than the useless and invalided man.

But we must now go to "No. 2 prison."

This large rectangular edifice opens in front upon the parade ground, and is occupied by artisans and able-bodied labourers. On entering one of the halls, which you step into on crossing the threshold, a singular and somewhat striking sight presents itself to the eye of the visitor. He sees before him the fronts of more than 160 cells, in four tiers of about forty in each. They are constructed of corrugated iron, and, being painted white, contrast very pleasantly with the wood-work, which is grained like old oak, and the light wire railing in front, which is of a dark green colour. A flight of stairs at each end of the hall conducts to the three upper landings, which are paved with slate, and kept, as everything else is, beautifully clean. Each cell is about seven feet high, seven feet in length, and nearly four feet in breadth. This seems but scant space; but, as the men are in their cells at night only, and at meal hours during the day, and as the cell furniture is very compactly arranged, and ventilation is well provided for, the room is said to be found quite sufficient.

In this prison, and in "No. 4 prison," strict silence is enforced whilst the men are in their cells, and all conversational communication is forbidden. This rule has been found necessary from the noise and confusion which prevailed when the prisoners went at their pleasure from cell to cell, and conversed without any hindrance on the part of their officers. The plan, at present in very successful operation, preserves quietude and proves a great privilege to those who wish to read without interruption, after they have returned from labour. This class of men is, we were glad to find, by no means small or inconsiderable.

"No. 3" is a large building resembling "No. 2" in size, form, and materials of construction. It is, however, fitted up very differently. It has three floors, and each story is a large open ward in which the prisoners dwell together in open and allowed association.

On being ushered into the chapel, a plain, commodious edifice, made out of an old prison, we found it in use during the day as a schoolroom. At the time of our visit there were about 100 prisoners in attendance, under the charge of two officers to preserve order, and three schoolmasters to impart instruction. Excellent discipline was kept; and, generally speaking, attention was paid to the useful and suitable lessons given by the masters. These gentlemen seemed to labour very earnestly in their vocation, and yet appeared, we thought, in speaking of their arduous and interesting work, to toil under some degree of discouragement. They have, it must be owned, a very hard and uphill task to perform. They have not to cast the imperishable seeds of truth into the opening and susceptible mind of youth; they have, on the contrary, to deal, for the most part, with fierce, keen, obdurate, sin-hardened men, who come to school, not willingly nor kindly, but perforce and angrily—more bent on imparting to each other the evil they have learned, than to receive good at the hands of their instructors. But, let all who struggle on in such trying spheres of Christian toil remember, for their encouragement, that the fiercer the contest the more glorious the victory; and that the Christian labourer works for Him, who looks rather at the spirit in which his work is done, than at the issues and results that his toiling servants see. We observed two prisoners seated at a table, busily employed in issuing and exchanging library books for their fellow-prisoners. There is, it appears, a love of reading amongst the greater part of these men. If the reading be, as we believe it is here, of a profitable and improving kind, this habit may, under the divine blessing, be the means of instilling, with dew-like quietude and efficacy, good and wholesome principles into the minds of these outcasts of society. We need scarcely say that we were gratified on observing that the monthly volumes of the Religious Tract Society were very prominent amongst the books in general circulation, and on learning that the "Leisure Hour" was so attractive as to be in very general request amongst the prisoners.

It is time, however, to draw our description to a close; and in order, therefore, to give our readers a concise but clear view of the work done by the convicts at Dartmoor Prison, the discipline to

which they are subjected, and the dietary to which they are restricted, we will endeavour to describe very briefly the avocations of an ordinary day.

Clang! clang! clang! The first bell is ringing. It is almost five o'clock in the morning, and the prisoners awake, knowing that in a few minutes they must "turn out." As the clock strikes five the bell rings again, the prison doors fly open for the admission of the day officers, and they enter, headed by a principal warder, unlock the cell doors, and forthwith report, one by one, from their different landings, that it is "all right"—by which they mean that nothing particular has occurred during the night, and that none of the prisoners have escaped. Then the night officer is suffered to depart, right glad, no doubt, to get to breakfast and to bed after walking up and down in the bleak stone halls of the prison all night, listening to the snoring of the sleeping men, and thinking that as far as the mode of passing the night is concerned the prisoners have decidedly the best of it.

Every man is now on the alert, folding up his bed-clothes and hammock, and cleaning out his cell. He then washes himself, and is, by the time he has completed his ablutions, quite ready for his breakfast. The breakfast, brought from the kitchen at about six o'clock, consists of bread and cocoa. Each man's allowance is 1 pint of cocoa and 12 oz. of bread. At half-past six o'clock the bell rings for morning prayers in the chapel; the service occupies about twenty minutes, and at seven o'clock all the men are on the parade ground fallen in for labour. They go off after being counted, gang by gang, to their work, which consists of clearing the stony ground around the prison, and trenching it to prepare it for cultivation. At certain seasons they cut, stack, and bring in turf from the bogs with which the station is surrounded. This is all the labour of which the nature of the soil will allow; and the endeavours made to fertilize the earth, and render it productive and remunerative, are at present, as far as we could see, anything but successful. At twelve o'clock the gangs come in to dinner, and go out to work again at a quarter past one o'clock. Work is continued as long as the daylight will allow during the winter months, and until half-past five o'clock during the other parts of the year. The dinner allowance of the able-bodied man on four days of the week consists of 6 oz. of boiled beef, 8 oz. of plain suet pudding, and 1 lb. of vegetables or rice. On the other three days, 5 oz. of meat, 1 pint of soup, 1 lb. of vegetables or rice, and 6 oz. of bread. The supper allowance on "soup days" is 9 oz. of bread and 1 pint of cocoa; on other evenings, 9 oz. of bread and 1 pint of oatmeal gruel.

On leaving work, the men are again assembled in the chapel for divine service, after which supper is served; and at eight o'clock P.M. the bell rings for bed. So passes the convict's day at Dartmoor.

The officers are a fine body of men, and strong persons are needed here, for the duties required are very onerous; and the fickle weather on the Dartmoor bogs makes the position of an officer at this station harassing to the mind, and very trying to the constitution.

A zealous and affectionate chaplain labours in

the establishment. His duties are arduous, and his efforts on behalf of his unhappy and peculiar flock are incessant and indefatigable.

"As our "Day at Dartmoor" ended, and we left the prison and its vicinity, we could not forbear thinking of the manifold and manifest consequences of sin—letting fall a tear over the frailty of our common humanity—and breathing forth a silent prayer to the throne of the Majesty on high, that the time may speedily come when "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea," and when, as a blessed result, these frowning monuments of human depravity shall be needed and known no more!

MEMOIRS OF A DIPLOMATIST OF THE LAST CENTURY.

At the time we write, England has just despatched to Vienna one of her most distinguished statesmen, in the capacity of ambassador extraordinary. We may not penetrate the mysterious veil of diplomacy which shrouds this mission, but our readers will probably be not uninterested in glancing with us at some passages in the life of one who acted as private secretary, nearly a century ago, on an embassy of a somewhat similar character.

M. Dutens, the individual of whom we speak, was a French gentleman of good family, who, driven by the first revolution from his native land to obtain a home elsewhere, found, like many other refugees at the time, in this country the wished-for asylum. England became the land of his adoption, and he was fortunate enough to attain a considerable station in English society. He became secretary of legation at Turin in 1758, and subsequently acted as private secretary to the right honourable Stuart Mackenzie, a member of the Bute administration. In these influential positions M. Dutens possessed the confidence of the government, enjoyed the acquaintance of many personages of rank, and moved in the diplomatic circles of the last century. He appears to have been much esteemed for his superior morality and probity at a period when political morals were, to say the least, somewhat lax. After several years' experience as a diplomatic servant, he published the contents of a diary he had long kept, in which he had drawn a series of pen and ink portraits of public men who lived when "George the Third was king." This book was suppressed by the author shortly after it was printed, on account of its abounding in notices of high personages and celebrities then living, which it was feared would give offence. An edition, however, of the work had got into circulation before its suppression, and from a copy which we have had an opportunity of examining we have drawn the materials of the present paper.

The parties named in it have long since departed from the stage of life, and no motive for concealment of M. Dutens' communications now remains.

The career of M. Dutens, who must be looked upon as a sort of political Gil Blas, commenced in the year 1750, when he was making the grand tour. A road-side *contre-temps* in France was the accidental cause of his introduction to the sister of William Pitt, the great earl of Chatham.

Miss Pitt and her companion, a Miss Taylor, were travelling on the continent. In an emergency then more common to tourists than is perhaps in these days the case—that of having to wait for remittances from home—they were detained at Vienna. M. Dutens, having made the acquaintance of the ladies on the road, ascertained their dilemma, and with the politeness and delicacy proverbial to his nation he induced them to accept his offer to become temporarily their banker. Miss Pitt was so gratified that she gave him a letter of introduction to her distinguished brother.

Dutens arrived in London with but a slender stock of English money and language, and so soon as he had set foot on English ground was obliged to avail himself of the guidance of a fellow traveller to steer him through the Minories and Aldgate, along which his course lay, on his road westward. They proceeded on foot from the river, and threaded the labyrinths that led them to the better thoroughfares. But the Minories, like most other of the streets of London, were not then paved or macadamized and asphalted as they now are, and were in a dirty, muddy, and uneven condition. Our adventurer observes: "Perfectly unacquainted with the manners and customs of Englishmen, I had attired myself, before quitting the packet that brought me up the Thames, in a full dress suit à la Française, and I made my *entrée* into Whitechapel, and mixed with its *canaille* in all the consequence of a fine coat of pink coloured cloth, black satin breeches, white silk stockings, with shoes ornamented with polished steel buttons. My servant walked behind and carried my portmanteau. A London populace, always attracted (as I now know) by singularity of attire, was quickly alive to my (to them) strange appearance, and I soon saw myself followed by a crowd of greasy *sans culottes* (called costermongers, *Anglicé*), and bawling, squeaking, and whistling idle boys, such as I hope never to be associated with again. They amused themselves with pelting me with mud and small stones, and making vulgar remarks, asking one another questions about me which must have possessed much humour, since each question elicited a roar of laughter. I had not gone many steps before I was plastered with dirt, and I earnestly begged my fellow traveller to try and get me out of the scrape. He fortunately could speak my language and understood me. After the lapse of a few minutes, during which time we still went on braving the crowd, we reached an inn, and my friend succeeded in leading me into it. I changed my spoilt clothes, and we then—the crowd having dispersed—got into a hackney-coach, and were driven to Leicester-square, in which locality I had a relative residing."

In a few days M. Dutens delivered his letters to Mr. Pitt, but did not see him, and returned home disconsolate. However, on the same day Mr. Pitt called in Leicester-square and behaved handsomely, even inviting Dutens to a lengthened visit to his seat at Heyes.

The following notice of the great statesman is interesting: "He is of noble stature, pale featured, with an eye like the eagle's. He told me that he could never sufficiently repay my polite attentions to a sister who was so dear to him. He regretted that I had not arrived in town sooner, as he could

have recommended me to lord Spencer, who had need of a companion to travel with him, and to have accompanied his lordship would have been an advantageous opportunity for me to have entered upon the world. However, Mr. Pitt promised that he would do all he could to recompense me for the loss of lord Spencer's patronage, and assured me that I might count upon his services. I had the honour of walking with Mr. Pitt across St. James's-park on his way home, and on my return I found my uncle highly pleased with the honour we had received from so great a statesman; so that my sojourn in his house was from that hour rendered more agreeable."

An intimacy between M. Dutens and the great statesman speedily sprung up; but, alas! the favour of the great is proverbially uncertain, and so M. Dutens found it. "In the midst," he writes, "of an intimacy so honoured and important, when his solicitude and friendship for me were at their height, I was fated to lose my patron's good opinion. Mr. Pitt suddenly estranged himself from me, not deigning one word of explanation! The porter denied him to me one day on my calling as usual. I was astounded; but thinking that the porter might be practising some mercenary *ruse* upon me, I presented him with a guinea, to induce him to announce my name to his master. Not liking to refuse my gift, the porter promised to announce me, although he well knew that it was totally out of his power to gain me the wished-for interview, and probably he never attempted it. He returned with the message that Mr. Pitt could see no one. I called often—day after day—the porter got tired of sending up my name, and had no communication for me from the minister. I next wrote to Mr. Pitt; this was equally useless. In the end I discovered, by letters from my family in France, that something had passed between Miss Pitt and my relations. She had written to her brother, choosing to express herself in a doubtful tone about me, wherefore I knew not, and inclining to withdraw her first recommendation. This extraordinary conduct I could only account for by the supposition that my friends had grievously offended her by using some incautious expression or other, which perhaps had wounded the pride of Miss Pitt, and excited her prejudices as an English-woman. I determined yet to see the statesman, and demand an explanation. I succeeded at last in obtaining an interview. Mr. Pitt was cold and distant. I represented that I ought not to be considered a party to the misunderstanding between the ladies. He said he quite agreed with me, but his manner was still constrained, and there appeared to be no means of restoring the serious breach that had been made."

Relieved now from dancing attendance in the *salons* of the politician, M. Dutens retires into private life, studies the English language, and eventually accepts employment as a private tutor, condescending only in this capacity to enter families of distinction. Influential friends were thus acquired by him, and through their aid he succeeds eventually in obtaining the post of secretary to Mr. Stuart Mackenzie, brother of lord Bute, and just then appointed envoy extraordinary to Turin.

Of the journey through the continent, in those days, when this country was prosecuting the war with France (1758), our newly made secretary gives a short but humorous description. "We left London in the month of October, 1758. The number of the diplomatic suite was considerably augmented by the appearance of sundry individuals desirous of making a tour of the continent under the wing of the envoy extraordinary, and thus availing themselves of the permission which the French government had politely accorded to our ambassador of passing through France under its protection. Mr. Mackenzie was in consequence attended on his journey by a full *cortège*. Our *entrée* into Calais, after a stormy passage across the channel, was sufficiently ridiculous. The Prince de Croy, who commanded the French forces in Picardy, was at Calais on our disembarkation. Desirous of rendering to the British ambassador all due honours, the prince commandant was ready, on our landing, with a party of troops from the garrison intended to escort us to the quarters assigned to us. The prince de Croy in person handed Mrs. Mackenzie from the vessel to the shore, and conducted her to the hotel. We had unfortunately most of us suffered from sea-sickness, and this circumstance, with the roughness of the weather, had prevented many from paying that attention to the toilette which etiquette demanded. Unwashed and unshaven, we had hoped to enter the town unobserved. Imagine the figures we must have cut: the lady of the envoy, with her hair *en papillote*, her person wrapped in a heavy shawl, herself half-dead with sea-sickness, had to appear, nevertheless, on deck and resign herself to the polite attentions of the prince, frizzed, powdered, and painted up to the eyes, looking remarkably spruce, and behaving with the extremest gallantry. The envoy followed his wife with an abashed manner and unsteady deportment, enveloped in his cloak, and with his hat stuck on his head over his nightcap. He was followed by an undisciplined troop of young gentlemen, with pallid and livid features, looking in their dishabille as miserable as so many drowned rats. It was in this state we were obliged to run the gauntlet of Calais town, our appearance rendered all the more ridiculous by the stylish contrast of the French prince's suite. As we were marched to our destination in the midst of troops, the band played, as if in mockery, the well-known martial air of "Malbrook," and the Frenchmen looked on with the most amused expression of countenance at our humiliating plight. The prince, having escorted lady Mackenzie to her hotel, invited the envoy and his entire suit to dine with him; but Mr. Mackenzie was so annoyed by this *mal-à-propos* entry into Calais, that although he had at first intended to stay one day at least in the town, he excused himself by urging the necessity for his immediate departure, and, with many apologies and thanks for the attention the prince had paid him as one of the representatives of the British court, Mr. Mackenzie hurried his departure, and lost his *cortège* a public dinner. We pursued our route through France and Savoy, and arrived at Turin without further adventure."

Dutens proceeds to describe his impressions of

the polished manners and tasteful splendour of a foreign court; but cannot accommodate himself, he writes, to the dishonest spirit of intrigue by which the courtiers are actuated. His own honesty proves a valuable acquisition to Mr. Mackenzie under the circumstances, as the following anecdote tends to show:—"The private secretary of the marquis of Carraccioli, then Neapolitan minister at Turin, had, it was reported, been tampered with by the envoy whom Mr. Mackenzie superseded, lord Bristol. His wife's extravagance rendered him somewhat unscrupulous; and for English gold he did not hesitate to communicate state secrets to his briber. He informed lord Bristol of a negotiation on foot, in which the Neapolitan government took an active part, for obtaining for the king of Sardinia the reversion of the duchies of Plaisance and Guastalla, upon the death of the king of Spain, who was then dying. The courts of Versailles and Madrid were scheming to preserve these identical possessions for the duke of Parma. The despatches of the Neapolitan ambassador, it was found, dwelt much upon the necessity of appropriating these duchies in the way suggested. The marquis of Carraccioli's secretary having been accustomed to show the despatches as regularly as they arrived, or were about to be forwarded to lord Bristol, brought them to Mr. Mackenzie in the same clandestine way, thinking it the condition for which he had been bribed and might expect to be bribed again. But Mr. Mackenzie would not condescend to so dishonourable a course as that of demoralizing the servant of a government for the sake of ascertaining beforehand the nature of its policy; and whatever his predecessors might have done, Mr. M. did not think it creditable to the honour of England for her representative to condescend to practices so mean. The marquis of Carraccioli was informed of the treachery of his secretary, and the culprit was immediately though quietly dismissed, and the affair hushed up. The marquis, however, begged that the despatches which had been so surreptitiously placed in our hands should be indicated, and as Mr. Mackenzie saw no objection, I read to him the information of which our court had been put in possession by lord Bristol through the treachery of the discharged secretary."

Another circumstance is equally curious; and while it does credit to Mr. Mackenzie, an anecdote connected with it partakes largely of the elements of the ludicrous. "We had," says M. Dutens, "a fresh opportunity of arriving at the state secrets of the Spanish court, although the high sense of honour of Mr. Mackenzie would not permit him to avail himself of it. The Spanish ambassador, coming to the bureau of the British minister one day, accidentally dropped from his pocket, as he was leaving, a packet of despatches which he had that day received. Mr. Mackenzie saw the papers lying on the ground the moment after the ambassador had left; and scorning a temptation that the diplomacy of the age recognised as one that might be legitimately taken advantage of, our minister himself snatched up the despatch, and ran after the Spanish minister to deliver up the lost paper. He reached his visitor on the stairs, and put the despatch into his hands. The ambassador, touched

with this trait of English character, overwhelmed Mr. Mackenzie with his thanks, exalting to the skies such honourable behaviour."

"The marquis related, in my hearing, a circumstance regarding the treatment of his despatches which had recently occurred to him at Vienna. He had suspected that an espionage of his correspondence was going on at that court. One day especially he received, instead of the original, a copy of one of the despatches from his own court, clearly showing that by some carelessness of the Austrian bureau they had actually forwarded to him a veritable proof that they clandestinely made copies of the confidential papers of other courts. Carraccioli lost no time in seeking an interview with the Austrian minister. 'Prince,' he said, addressing him, 'will you have the goodness to cause your people to return a despatch they have kept from me, and sent me instead, no doubt accidentally, a copy of it in the German language?' 'Ah,' returned the Austrian diplomat, with equal *sang-froid*, 'is it so? Just like them. But a thousand pardons, monsieur l'ambassadeur, for the trouble they have given you (ringing his bell); you shall soon have your despatch.' A secretary entering, the minister sent him away with whispered directions, and he soon returned with the lost document. 'Take care for the future,' said the prince, blandly, 'that our people do not commit another blunder, or I will dismiss every assistant in the bureau.' Then turning to Carraccioli, he with much politeness handed him the missing paper, observing, 'I must repeat, monsieur l'ambassadeur, I am really quite ashamed of this *contre-temps*, and hope you will excuse the negligence which has caused it.' And with this he bowed the Spanish minister out."

"One more instance, out of many of less importance, I have it in my power to relate, of the immoral character of continental diplomacy. Mr. Mackenzie had not been long at his embassy, when he was visited one morning by an individual who presented a letter from Mr. Mitchell, the British minister at Berlin. The letter stated that the bearer was General the Baron de Coccei, commanding a division of the Prussian army, and that he had been sent secretly by the king of Prussia to make certain important propositions to Sardinia [propositions which, at this distance of time, hardly concern us], but they were of a nature so altogether unlike anything that could emanate legitimately from diplomatic relations, that Mr. Mackenzie, while he entertained the pretended envoy with scrupulous attention, was suspicious. The baron remained a few days at Turin, during which time he was recognised by a person as a Jew merchant from Saxony. His conduct did not tally with the position he assumed. In short, he proved to be an impostor; for, in due course, despatches arrived from England, explaining that Mr. Mitchell had been duped, and directing our envoy to traverse immediately whatever might have unfortunately been done in consequence of the *ruse* which an agent of the British government at Berlin had so unfortunately indorsed. But the sagacity of Mr. Mackenzie had, as has been seen, prevented any harm arising; otherwise, a negotiation might have been entered into with the cognizance of the English cabinet, which probably would have overthrown

the system of policy prevailing at the time. The impostor decamped in order to escape the punishment due to a spy."

Dutens also furnishes a characteristic anecdote of the count de Viry, an ancient diplomat of the Piedmontese court. "No man could boast of getting at the secrets of this old official, hidden as they were behind the impenetrable embrasure of his countenance. His reserve was carried to an extreme point, and he even kept it up in his own household establishment; the merest message with which a servant was charged was made to appear a matter of mystery to the other domestics. If the ambassador happened to be indisposed, the circumstance was treated as having all the importance of a state secret. He once suffered with a bad leg; a particular surgeon was sent for to doctor it; meanwhile, the complaint having extended to the other limb, he ordered another surgeon to attend it separately. So there were two surgeons at the same time doctoring the same man; with the difference, that each had a limb to his own special care, and must not trouble himself whatever with regard to the state of the other. Neither of the count de Viry's legs, as medical science, thus singularly divided, would have it, got well again, and the count's eccentricity, in fact, was the cause of his death. The ruling passion was strong in death. Such was the reputation this old diplomatist bore through life for practising the valuable official quality of reserve, that even on his death-bed, some one coming into the chamber to inquire the count's state, his secretary replied, 'Hush, he is dead; but he bid me with his last breath not to let any one know it.'"

The death of George II, in October, 1760, caused a general removal of officials connected with the British cabinet, and amongst the rest, Mr. Mackenzie was recalled from Turin.

Immediately on secretary Dutens' return to London from the continent, he was presented by Mr. Mackenzie to king George III, who had but just mounted the throne. "I had the honour," he says, "to kiss hands with his Majesty, but alas! it was a ceremony I performed with some regret; for my appointments ceased from that moment. The king, however, was so kind as to address some obliging words on my behalf to my staunch and well-tried patron, from which I derived hopes for the future." He was soon comfortably settled down as the private secretary of his patron, who had been appointed to another ministerial post at home. "My business," he says, "is to be daily and hourly receiving applications and listening to applicants for place. The moment a vacancy occurs, we receive at least twenty applications for it. This annoys Mr. Mackenzie, because he knows that he can only oblige one, and in so doing he must necessarily make nineteen discontented. But he always appoints according to the fitness of the individual. He pays no attention to letters of introduction unless of a very influential kind indeed; and even then the party recommended must not be a mere dolt. By following this course, Mr. Mackenzie relieves himself from a weight of public business not necessarily belonging to his legitimate duties. But why am I writing of place-hunters? I am one myself. My employer answers my tacit aspirations for place by anticipating my thoughts.

'You know you are one of my personal friends. You need fear no harm from having to wait. I shall presently see something that will suit you. If I serve the more pressing, it is for political reasons; my friends will not be ultimately overlooked, if I think them adapted for employment under the government.' I perceived the justice of this reasoning, and had an insight into the selfishness of my own character."

In the year 1762, negotiations for peace were opened, the king now desiring it, although the duke of Newcastle objected, and in consequence resigned. Lord Bute took his place. In brief, at the close of the year the preliminaries of peace were entered upon. A change of ambassadors took place in consequence. The duke of Bedford was sent to Paris, the duke of Nivernois came to London from the French capital, both to sign the articles of pacification. There was a somewhat tart saying current concerning the French ambassador. "On the arrival of the duke of Nivernois, who was a remarkably spare and diminutive man, lord Townsend observed, on first seeing him, 'Why, they have sent us the *preliminaries* of a man to sign these preliminaries of peace!'"

Peace was at last concluded in the winter of 1763. It marked the termination of lord Bute's temporary administration. The king wished him to retain office, but in vain. Lord Bute, albeit with the best support a minister could have, appeared not to have the stamina in himself for the wear and tear of office under a monarch so jealous of authority as George III. His health, too, was naturally bad. It was on the plea of indisposition that Bute is reported to have said to the king that "he was ready to die in the service of the crown, but he could not promise to *live* in it." His majesty's answer was: "In that case I would rather lose my minister than my friend," and accepted his resignation.

Before Dutens' patron quitted office he obtained for his secretary a pension of 500*l.* per annum. It was the last treasury order he had the power of countersigning. And so ends the story of a diplomatist of the last century!

MY ESCAPE FROM THE BITE OF DEADLY SERPENTS.

It may be about twelve years since, that the writer was engaged as one of those pioneers in the forest jungles of Ceylon, who led the way in the formation of the coffee plantations, which now cover the mountain sides of the central province, and yield so rich a revenue to their proprietors. In that part of the country where I was then employed, the blocks of forest land on which Europeans had commenced to measure their energies with the Cingalese inhabitants, were and still are widely separated from each other. My clearing was ten miles from that of my nearest neighbour, separated by a toilsome route, fatiguing in a high degree to the foot passenger, and requiring in the mounted horseman no less nerve than that possessed by a cross-country rider, to bring him over rocks, round the edges of precipices, through narrow ways beset with thorny creepers, and to swim his horse over a broad and deep stream.

But all this is nothing when you are used to it; only there sometimes arrives a period when the European inhabitant finds he can no longer go comfortably through such expeditions as these. In short, he has lost his nerve; and this is a sufficient hint that the rapid breaking up of his constitution can only be avoided by a change to a temperate latitude.

In a situation of so much seclusion, it would be wonderful if the work before the planter did not become almost engrossing to his every faculty, and cast him upon many resources to relax his mind. Of the latter I had various. I read, I wrote, I calculated, I drew designs for plantation buildings; and I kept up a large correspondence with my friends in Europe by the overland mail. Amongst other amusements, I maintained, as well as jungle vermin would permit me, a large family of fowls. I seldom or never killed any of these for the table, purchasing generally from the country people the very few I cared to eat. By keeping my feathered friends so long, they were not only very tame, but I came to have a familiarity with their countenances and their habits, so that for me each hen possessed a character, and was known by a name corresponding to that of some human biped in whom I had known the same characteristics to predominate. Perhaps my reader will be disposed to ridicule the idea that amongst fowls around a barn-door are to be seen the industrious and the idle, the earnest and the phlegmatic, the notable and the lounging, the pug-nacious and the peaceable, the impertinent and the retiring, the staid and the giddy, the apparently wise and the obviously foolish; yet I can assure him, if he will live amongst his fowls as I did in the verandah of my mud residence, he will very soon discover all these traits of character for himself.

Nothing pleased me more than enlarging my family by broods of chickens. I sometimes smile now to remember how punctually I made memoranda of the sitting days, and how carefully I used to watch the advent of the youngsters who very frequently, for the first time, saw the light, that is to say as much of it as was possible, from under my bed. For the especial discomfiture of jackalls, kites, snakes, and even crows (who are great enemies of the poultry-yard in Ceylon), a double-barrelled gun, loaded with shot, always stood in a handy corner. It happened on a night of great darkness, when it was peculiarly difficult to distinguish objects, that the clucking note of the mother of a family warned me that mischief was abroad. I rose on the instant, and taking the fowling-piece from the bed-side, I soon found the noise proceeded from a hen who with chickens was housed in a basket placed under a coop in the verandah. On lifting off this coop, the hen was perceived to have left the basket, and was collecting her little ones under her on the mud floor. In the basket could be discerned one chick only which had not joined its parent, the whiteness of its colour rendering it perceptible amidst the darkness. In my haste, therefore, I clutched the basket by one of its sides, and found it very heavy. Instantly it flashed upon me that there might be a snake

inside, and without hesitation I fired one barrel of my gun into it and kicked it over. The report aroused the servant, who presently brought a light. We removed the basket cautiously, when I found that the shot had destroyed two snakes, three and four feet long. They were not the harmless rat snakes which are so fond of eggs and chickens, but tie-polongas. Their bite is as deadly as that of the cobra, or hooded snake, to which the superstition of the natives of Ceylon attributes a benevolent disposition, whilst they have a legend to show the revengeful and malicious character of the polonga. I have since often thought of this providential escape with thankfulness; how my hand was so guided that it did not touch these monsters, and that I did not draw them towards me by lifting the basket and disturbing them. Interested, too, as I was in my chickens, I cannot but regard it as a providential restraint that I did not, without a thought, plunge my hand into the centre of the basket to lift out the little creature that was lying there. I have been the object of providential protection on many other occasions, and so have you, my reader. None of us are for an instant out of the keeping of Him who made us—a truth it would be needless to repeat, were it not so generally forgotten.

THE BANE OF PRIDE.

THE professed disciple of Christ cannot too cautiously guard against the seductions of pride. Peter, on the evening of the Lord's supper, exaggerated most loudly the guilt of the disciple by whom his Master was to be betrayed. He was most anxious to know his name, and to hold him up to merited detestation; and immediately after, he himself falls into the recreancy which he had just before denounced with such confidence and pride.

Lucifer proudly aspired to be like God in power, and was thrown down from heaven; Adam strove to be like him in knowledge, and was expelled from Eden.

Beware, then, of pride, the fearful influence of which extends through the present life, and sometimes even beyond. Said an Indian chief, who died at Washington, "When I am dead, let the big guns be fired over me." The rich man, scorning to repose lowly like ordinary mortals, not unfrequently orders his own sarcophagus, and builds a family tomb replete with vain display, and destined to be the monument of posthumous pride. But what will all these hollow and perishable decorations avail your soul departing to the judgment seat? They will be as barren of comfort as the shroud of the grave round your cold body. Dying in sin, God will mock when your fear cometh. The scorner will thenceforth be eternally scorned. If you madly waste life in frivolous pursuits, then the hour will suddenly arrive when you can no more avert the scorner's awful doom, than with your dead hand you can arrest the undertaker who screws the coffin-lid closely down upon your marble brow and congealed heart.—*Proverbs for the People.*

Scientific Varieties.

PROFESSOR OWEN has just made known the existence of a new species of wild man or chimpanzee, an animal larger, more ferocious, and in every respect more powerful than any previously known species. The professor's information concerning this denizen of the African forests was communicated in a lecture to the members of the Royal Institution, on the 19th of January; his main object being to disprove the truth of that impious and very silly theory of progressive development, according to which it has been assumed that animal forms of low grade may, by progressive stages of advancement, and in the course of many years, become elevated in the scale of creation. The resemblance in aspect between *man-kind* and *monkey-kind* is too obvious for comment—that is to say, the outward gross resemblance—but it extends no farther. Even in the giant chimpanzee, the subject of professor Owen's lecture, a creature far more human-looking than any of his fellows, the distinction between the brute and the man is impassable.

Having furnished our readers with an outline of the philosophy of professor Owen's lecture, we will proceed to recapitulate a few of the leading facts connected with the natural history of orang-outangs and chimpanzees—creatures to which the vulgar appellation of *wild men* has been applied. Both are similar in the general features of external appearance, and indeed their anatomical characteristics are not very diverse; they are sufficiently so, however, to warrant a natural historical distinction.

Orang-outangs are natives of Borneo, and perhaps a few islands of the Indian Archipelago beside. Chimpanzees are, without exception, natives of Western Africa. In the latter region stories have long been widely circulated about a monkey-like creature, stronger and more ferocious than the lion, but no specimens of the chimpanzee brought to Europe confirmed the rumour. All the creatures of this kind to be seen in our gardens are more like caricatures of stunted decrepit old men, than ferocious beasts—gentleness being more characteristic of their natures than ferocity; so at length it came to be imagined that the highly-coloured tales of negroes killed, maimed, or carried away by these monkey monsters were all a myth. At length, however, a specimen of one of these creatures has been obtained, and may be seen in the Jardin des Plantes at Paris. Professor Owen could not bring him personally before the members of the Royal Institution; but he did the next best thing—he brought the animal's picture. From a consideration of the size and strength of the creature's muscular fibre, the lecturer had not the least doubt that in point of strength he was equal to the lion, and in point of cunning and intelligence he may be supposed to equal at least others of the monkey tribe; most probably, therefore, the tales so long current about his malicious daring and prowess are quite correct.

If from the animal kingdom we now turn to the vegetable, a very important subject opens for our consideration—a substitute for the potato. Most persons, no doubt, are aware that the potato disease, which first manifested itself in 1836, has never since been completely eradicated. Very important then is it to discover some equivalent for this justly valued vegetable. French botanists have been turning their attention towards a root known in China by the name of the iguame, or iguama, but the latest botanical name of which is *Discorea Batatas*. The edible part of the plant is, as in the case of the potato, a tuber; the quality of the latter, however, differs from the potato in several important particulars. When raw, it contains a milky juice; when cooked, it assumes the taste and consistency of boiled rice. The best season for planting this nutritious vegetable is in April (at Paris), and the tuber or edible portion ripens about October. Not the least valuable quality of the Chinese tuber is this: if sliced and dried in a stove, the slices may be ground like wheat into flour, and made into very excellent bread.

The Italian professor Targioni has been publishing a most interesting series of historical notes on cultivated plants. Respecting the orange, he says that this fruit was first conveyed from India to Arabia, in the ninth century; that in the eleventh century plants were unknown in Europe, or at any rate in Italy, but that shortly after

this period they were carried westward by the Moors. Towards the end of the twelfth century they were grown at Seville; at Palermo in the thirteenth, and probably also in Italy; for it is said that St. Dominic planted an orange for the convent of St. Sabina in Rome, in the year 1200. In the course of the same thirteenth century the crusaders found citrons, oranges, and lemons very abundant in Palestine; and in the fourteenth both oranges and lemons became very common in Italy. The shaddock, however, is believed to have arrived in Europe by a separate route. It was probably indigenous to the south-eastern extremity of the Asiatic continent, whence it was carried to the West Indies, and from Jamaica and Barbadoes to England early in the eighteenth century. It was, however, known earlier than this in Italy. Respecting the cedar of Lebanon professor Targioni mentions a curious fact. The tree was known to the ancients as of great value: they knew also that it grew in part of Western Asia and Northern Africa, regions with which the Romans had much intercourse. Nevertheless the cedar of Lebanon was conveyed to Italy from England, having been planted in the botanic garden of Pisa, nearly a century after Miller had introduced it into the Apothecaries' garden at Chelsea, and fifty-three years after Jussieu had planted his specimen in the Jardin du Roi at Paris.

Mr. H. Churton, of New Zealand, has recently forwarded a very interesting letter to his friend Mr. Stevens, and which has been brought before the Zoological Society, relative to some peculiar birds indigenous to the above colony. Before we quote from this communication, it may be, perhaps, advisable to inform our readers that New Zealand was in past times the native home of several species of wonderful birds of enormous size and powerful limb, but wingless; they roamed through the fern-tangled forests of that strange land, and at length, as people thought, became extinct. A member of some species, however (not the largest), was captured alive some few years back and eaten by the gluttonous master of some trading vessel. Fortunately, however, the skin was preserved, and finding its way into the possession of a son of the late Dr. Mantell, the bird, its representative, became known as the *Notornis Mantelli*. A still more curious tale attaches to a member of a still larger species. A traveller returning from New Zealand brought with him a small fragment of bone. The bone was laid before professor Owen for investigation; and he, having studied well its various characteristics, pronounced it to be that of an enormous bird. True to his belief, professor Owen sketched the bird as it should have been; and though some people smiled at the gigantic reproduction, the professor calmly waited his time. At length, however, a full set of bones was discovered in New Zealand, and having been built up into a skeleton *secundum artem*, that skeleton was found to be the exact representation of professor Owen's sketch. Well, *à propos* of these gigantic birds, Mr. Churton imagines that living specimens may still be in existence on the middle island of the New Zealand group, although he believes them to be extinct in the others. As for the largest bird—the one so associated with the name of professor Owen—it is considered to have become extinct in every island of the group. It is a curious fact that not only birds, but several varieties of quadrupeds, have become quite recently extinct in New Zealand. There was the native rat, an animal perhaps more like an opossum than a true rat, and which, while it lasted, was considered a delicate *bonne bouche*: it is now quite extinct, domestic cats and European rats (both of which have long in New Zealand taken to the woods) having totally destroyed them. A similar fate has attended several varieties of New Zealand mice.

A VERY interesting fact in natural history occurred a few weeks since, in the capture of a whale in the flat waters of the Solway in Cumberland, whither it had doubtless fled to escape the legion of many hundreds of voracious carnivora in pursuit of it. There its pursuers followed it to their cost; and many a cottager along that coast has reason to be glad that they did so, as their lamps are provided with oil for many a winter in consequence.